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HOMELAND SECURITY PASS TO USCG-ROTTERDAM (GCZERWONKA)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EWWT](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: CONGO'S MARITIME PORTS: NEGLECTED TRANSPORT LINK?

REF: A. KINSHASA 391
[1](#)B. KINSHASA 182

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. The DRC is likely to remain off the U.S. Coast Guard's "blacklist," following the second USCG visit to Congolese international maritime ports. Two USCG officers visited three of the DRC's eight listed international maritime ports May 1 and 2 to review security conditions and commercial capacity. Overall, the port security upgrades and the Congolese officials' commitment to continuing upgrades impressed the USCG. However, the serious overcrowding at Matadi Port and the GDRC's seeming lack of attention to this problem was of concern. Further, EconOff's observations and information indicate that Matadi is not as secure as GDRC officials would have the USG believe. All three ports are operating below commercial capacity; space management and infrastructure deficiencies and a lack of political interest are the key factors preventing improvements. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Two officials from the USCG Rotterdam Liaison Office visited the DRC April 30 through May 3 to evaluate the progress the GDRC has made in securing its international maritime ports. EconOff and an Embassy Shipping Section LES accompanied them to three ports - Matadi, SEP-Congo and Boma. EconOff also met with the port security officer and manager of SOCOPE, a privately-owned-and-operated port near Matadi. The USCG did not visit the five other listed ports because it was determined on the previous USCG visit that three were largely in compliance with the International Maritime Organization's International Ship and Port Facility Security code (ISPS), one did not qualify as an international port, and another had negligible shipping traffic.

MATADI - NOT WHAT IT COULD BE

[1](#)3. (SBU) Matadi remains the DRC's key maritime port, and its most problematic. Access and container overcrowding are the greatest concerns, caused primarily by management and infrastructural deficiencies. Access control remains questionable. EconOff and the USCG officers saw many persons in the secure zone without required access badges. Port security officials claim that all persons in this area have badges but have not developed a culture of wearing them, despite a port police force that in theory has enough personnel to enforce this policy. (Note: EconOff continues to receive reports from contacts that port officials generally do very little to limit access to secure areas. End note.)

[1](#)4. (U) The ongoing container overcrowding was even more of a concern for the USCG (reftel A). 5000-6000 containers stacked three and four high create canyons through which vehicles and personnel must navigate. Reference to hand-written records is the only way to determine the contents of each container. Because empty containers are often atop each stack, removing

a full container can be like trying to solve the Rubic cube, with several moves required to get to the one needed. Indicative of the problem, the PFSO did not really know how many containers are in the port or whether any plan exists to reduce their numbers. Typical of the GDRC, ONATRA officials, including the Port Facility Security Officer (PFSO), said that the customs' agency (OFIDA) is responsible for the container management, while OFIDA pointed to ONATRA. Given that ONATRA charges a storage fee (albeit small) for full containers remaining more than four days in port, it clearly assumes at least some responsibility. (Note: Perhaps the revenue generating potential of storing the containers outweighs the incentive to have them removed. End note.) Finally, the fact that several different services involve themselves in port security and management certainly leads to some of Matadi's difficulties.

¶5. (U) Matadi still meet the commercial demands placed on it. It has ten piers, six of which are in service, although the World Bank reportedly agreed over a year ago to fund the rehabilitation of the other four piers. As with Boma, it handles more imports than exports. According to the PFSO, chief exports include rubber and wood, although dozens of large logs are lingering in the port. Imports include consumer goods, construction materials and consumables. It can take as much as a week to unload and process all formalities at port, and EconOff has seen dozens of trucks waiting in long lines both inside and outside the port's gates.

¶6. (U) Funding for Matadi's rehabilitation is slow to arrive. It has received some funds from ONATRA for its upgrades, and Antwerp, its partner port, is funding the renovation of one pier. The Belgian Technical Cooperation Ministry continues to lobby the GDRC to install private management in the port.

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Rail service from Matadi to Kinshasa operates at about ten percent of capacity due to the disrepair of the lines and locomotives. The PFSO claims that service occurs as often as everyday, and that some locomotives can haul up to 100 containers. (Note: Passenger service is unprofitable and is therefore only once per week. End note.) Recently, a Chinese company reportedly signed a Memorandum of Understanding in connection with its proposal to rehabilitate the Kinshasa-Matadi railway.

BOMA - AN ALTERNATIVE TO MATADI?

¶7. (SBU) Boma, 75 miles downriver from Matadi, is better-known as the Congo's first colonial capital than it is for any modern-day activity. The USCG found Boma to be generally in compliance with the ISPS. Security improvements include new signage, lighting, and the ongoing construction of visitor holding areas. However, a well-organized plan does not yet exist to keep the public outside of secure areas. Pedestrian ingress and egress routes for ferry passengers and customs' clients are not clearly delineated. The PFSO said that the port has funded all upgrades with its own revenues. (Note: The PFSO said that the Minister of Transport has never visited Boma and displays no interest in supporting its rehabilitation. End note.)

¶8. (U) Increased port traffic has certainly increased the port's revenue. In September 2005, during the last USCG visit, Boma reported receiving as few as one to two ships per month. The PFSO said that now three to four per week dock there, each spending about three days in the port. He also said that each boat that unloads at Boma pays ONATRA about USD 40,000 in fees. It is unclear whether the traffic increase is the result of real economic growth or merely captains' decisions to avoid the overcrowded Matadi Port. For example, EconOff saw two ships anchored in the Congo River at Boma, waiting for an available pier upriver at Matadi.

¶9. (U) Boma has promising but limited expansion capacity. It

is easily accessible from the main road, has four piers (three of which are currently serviceable), and the capacity for at least 1000 vehicles in transit, although it did not appear that those in a holding area were moving very quickly out of the port. It also has some warehouse space and a 1500 container capacity, with 600 currently in the port. As at most official Congolese border crossings, imports - mainly vehicles, basic food stuffs (sugar, salt, mayonnaise, mineral water) and general consumer goods - exceed exports (mainly coffee and wood). However, Boma's potential as a final unloading point remains limited because it has no rail line, and the road toward Kinshasa cannot safely and efficiently accommodate container trucks. Further, Boma does not yet have a one-stop customs window ("guichet unique"). Despite a December 2005 presidential decree that OFIDA be the revenue collector at customs points, shippers must go to the port to obtain the documents for all fees and taxes due and to pay ONATRA's fees, and then, at a nearby bank, pay the amounts due to other state services (reftel B).

ANGO-ANGO: PIPELINE TO WESTERN CONGO

¶10. (U) Security arrangements at Ango-Ango also satisfied the USCG officers. SEP-Congo, the petroleum distribution parastatal, operates this port. SEP-Congo's manager said that the GDRC has approved its security plan since the 2005 USCG visit. With just 160 employees and one gate into the facility, secured access is easier to control. All petroleum for the western DRC passes either through this port or the SOCIR facility in Banana, at the Congo's mouth. Because the port is shallow, large tankers must transfer petroleum to smaller ships near Banana before completing the journey upriver to Ango-Ango. According to the port manager, about three to four ships per week dock at Ango-Ango. Tanker trucks and rail cars carry diesel fuel to Kinshasa, whereas jet fuel (up to 10 cubic meters per week), kerosene and gasoline (up to 15 cubic meters per week) travel through two pipelines.

¶11. (U) Total Fina Elf owns 44 percent of SEP-Congo, Shell has eight percent and Cohydro (the Congolese state-owned retail petroleum company) and the GDRC own the balance. The facility has several holding tanks, with a 600 cubic meter capacity.

Comment

¶12. (SBU) Insufficient political will continues to hamper the

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security upgrades and port rehabilitation needed to meet the needs of the DRC's growing economy. Because so few U.S. ships transit these ports, this problem does not directly harm U.S. interests. However, these ports remain a linchpin to the recovery of the Congolese economy, and thus we will continue to press the GDRC to remain focused on this sector and to support credible domestic and donor-funded projects. End comment.

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